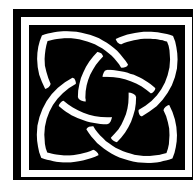




Appleby Archaeology Newsletter



Volume 12 Issue 3 : Autumn 2009

Editorial

The berries are back on the rowan trees, and here we are again with the Autumn issue of Appleby Archaeology News - the summer seems to have passed in a flash. Yet the Group can hardly be said to have been idle and I believe we can look back with satisfaction on both another successful season of excavation and an exceptionally popular programme of outings.

If you missed Frank Giecco's guided tour of the Scordale mine workings, I'm afraid you missed a treat. But you can still read about it below in Tony Greenwood's account. Last year, you may remember, we had to abandon our plans for this trip amid apocalyptic downpours and concerns for member safety. This year, we demonstrated the value of persistence.

Persistence was also the watchword at Brackenber Phase II, this year's excavation week. The weather was now disinclined to do us further favours, finds were thin on the ground and loins needed to be girded and upper lips stiffened. Once again, though, Appleby Archaeology members seem to have relished the challenge and appear also to have rather enjoyed themselves. Carol Dougherty's article overleaf will give you a flavour of what it was like.

Finally, on a perfectly beautiful day in early August, an unusually large group of members, led by Erik Matthews enjoyed a delightful tour of the medieval estates in the upper Eden Valley. Again, you can read all about it (and there's a lot to say) later in this Newsletter. And this rather leads me onto :

The Autumn Conference

Colm McNamee, one of our speakers is unwell and sadly has had to withdraw from the Conference. Happily, however, our recent association with Erik Matthews (see above) has borne fruit and he has kindly agreed to fill the gap. He will be talking about *"Peel Towers, Hunting and Anti-Social Behaviour - the Later Medieval Seigneurial Landscape of Mallerstang"*.

Those who attended the Upper Eden walk will know that a treat is hereby guaranteed. We still have no grant funding but since we've now sold over fifty tickets we're starting to breathe a bit more freely- though there are still a few seats left if you've not bought your own ticket yet!

Martin Joyce

Visit to Scordale mines

On 21st June, the group celebrated Fathers' Day by walking from Hilton up Scordale Beck to explore the remains of the lead and baryte processing facilities at the top end of the valley.

The first edition ordnance survey map shows a tramway, a millrace, a crushing mill and numerous buildings in the vicinity of the Murton and Hilton lead mine. We were joined by Frank Giecco from North Pennines Archaeology to see what the remains can tell us about what happened there down the centuries.

The first thing we had to appreciate was that the landscape



Mining Culvert in Scordale

there is mainly artificial. We had a hint of this on the way up the beck when we walked past Lowfield Hush and saw where a deep gouge had been made in

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the hillside by rapidly releasing impounded water to strip the surface in the search for ores. In the vicinity of the mines, we saw how the beck had formerly been culverted, every drop of water put to use in washing ores and powering machinery, and every square yard of valley floor used for crushing and sorting. Frank explained the major problems that this now causes for the archaeology. The site's operations and very existence depended on the management of the often torrential beck, and now that mining has ceased and the culverts have collapsed, the beck is once again free to find a natural course, carving through the archaeology as if it didn't care about the damage it was causing.

As well as the destruction caused by the beck, there was evidence of how the water had been put to use to power machinery. One of the collapsing stone structures had been the starting point for a launder that carried water to a waterwheel, of which there would have been several at the site. We saw a filled-in wheelpit next to a small building for the equipment powered by the wheel.

One possibility was that the building had contained a stamp mill where the waterwheel would have driven a small number of hammers which crushed the ore. As it did so, the smaller



Remains of wheel-pit - black line indicates original layout

pieces were washed out of the mill for buddling. Frank showed us evidence for where the ore was crushed and then buddled to sort the heavier from the lighter components. One buddle had been partially excavated so its circular plan and its clay lining were clearly



Remains of buddle - black line indicates original circular layout

visible, so we were able to imagine the rotating brushes pushing the lighter material to the edge of the buddle in such a way that the crushed ore would end up in layers that would be dug out, either for further crushing and buddling or for transport to the smelt mill at Hilton, of which the remains are visible at the end of the walk.

Undertaking archaeological work at the site is difficult. The site is a scheduled ancient monument and a SSSI, so getting permission to work there is a significant hurdle. Then there is the ongoing water damage which makes the work simultaneously urgent and hazardous, added to which it falls within the Warcop Ranges where the MOD only allows access on certain weekends during the year. The structure of the site is complex as mining operations took place over a two hundred year period with frequent

changes in technology and purpose. Since the closure of the mines, some buildings, including the smelt mill, have been deliberately destroyed and areas of waste have been re-sifted when ore prices are high.

As a bonus, we were joined on the walk by Paul Frodsham, archaeologist for North Pennines AONB, who pointed out the bronze age agricultural landscape on a south-facing slope along the north side of Hilton beck. When conditions are right, it is possible to see field boundaries and the area is dotted with clearance cairns from when rocks were removed to help ploughing.

The Scordale walk was a really interesting way to spend a fairly dry Sunday afternoon with a wide range of things to look at, explore, and learn about. Archaeological work on the site is continuing as more of it is revealed and threatened by the water action, so look out for news of further discoveries about the development of mining in the area.

Tony Greenwood

Brackenber Phase II - The Druidical Judgement Seat

During the week 18th - 24th July several members of the group continued with Phase II of the excavation at this intriguing site. The aim was to examine the entrance to the enclosure and the terminus of the ditch, to hopefully find dating evidence and anything else which might lead to more of an understanding as to just what may have been going on there.

The first couple of sunny days



Site Conference - Brackenber phase II

involved Martin, Trish, Mick and 3 volunteers marking out area A - the ditch terminus- and then beginning the processes of de-turfing, digging and sieving every bucket load of soil, gentle scraping and troweling, heavier digging, noting changes in soil layers etc.

Trish made the first find whilst troweling - a small piece of flint- several small pieces of charcoal and another flint (by sieving) were also found.

Days three and four saw the arrival of more members and they began the same routine in area B

- the entrance.

More charcoal was found along with a charred hazelnut, a small piece of pottery and a flint that had indents along one edge to create a small "saw" blade.

Soil samples were taken at a couple of levels for environmental testing. In addition to surveying the excavated areas



Trowelling the layers

we also recorded the progress of the excavation by means of drawings and photographs.

The weather worsened considerably during the last three days but Martin and Angus, the NPA assistant, carried out



Hard labour in the ditch

some heavy-duty work with the mattock to reach the bottom of the terminus and two volunteers tried their best to examine bucket loads of wet, heavy soil

- it turned out to be a largely thankless task with finds amounting to a few bits of charcoal.

Another piece of flint was found on the last afternoon in the entrance trench just before the farmer came to bulldoze the whole lot of sieved soil back in. We laid the turves back on top and left the site looking very tidy - in a short while no-one will know we were there - but I am looking forward with interest to see what the professionals can conclude from the dig and the resulting finds.

Carol Dougherty

One of my favourite books is GM Fraser's "The Steel Bonnets" and one of the things I've somehow always managed to remember from it is

Bad behaviour in the Upper Eden Valley

Fraser's account of how a Scottish army of 20,000 was routed by one Thomas Wharton with just 3000 men at the battle of Solway Moss. Back in 1542, when all this took place, Wharton could just have sat it out in Carlisle. But as you'll see, this wasn't his style and anyway his 3000 men included a useful number of Border reivers!

Standing in front of the grim gatehouse of Wharton Hall, Thomas Wharton's Cumbrian base, all this started to come alive for me. As our guide, Erik Matthews explained, Thomas Wharton was a man

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of quite extraordinary belligerence. Where other members of Henry VIII's court in need of a new gatehouse might have told their builder to deliver elegance with a hint, perhaps, of European refinement, Thomas just wanted a huge wall and a door - something that said bluntly "enter here at your peril". He certainly got what he wanted!

Quite a crowd of us had met at the pub in Nateby and walked through the fields to Wharton Hall. The current residents are not welcoming (clearly the passage of years has not mellowed anyone much) and so we



Gatehouse at Wharton Hall

could do no more than gaze open-mouthed from the yard. But this must be one of the most extraordinary buildings in Cumbria.

More interest was to follow as we continued through the field for another mile or so to Lammerside. At first sight this appeared to be just a rather sad, collapsing ruin - a "dolorous" four-square tower in a fold of fellside above the Eden. But, as Erik explained, we were seeing only a small remnant of the original structure. And in any case we had come through the "back door", as it were. If we'd approached as intended across the

long-vanished stone bridge over the Eden we would have seen the tower soaring above an imposing stone curtain wall, accompanied by another large structure containing the main domestic accommodation. The tower was in fact a sort of guest house and everything was designed to impress.

The problem here, however, was the neighbours. Not only was Thomas Wharton rampaging just down the road at Wharton Hall, but a few miles away in the other direction were the Cliffords at Pendragon Castle. On occasions, we were told, this led to full-scale armed confrontation.

Looking out over the peaceful Eden scenery you could never have possibly imagined any of this. Erik certainly opened our eyes.

Martin Joyce



Ruins, Lammerside Castle

Autumn Lecture Programme

Excavations at Brougham 2008

Tuesday 8th September

Kelly Clapperton, Field Work Supervisor, Oxford Archaeology North

October Conference: Medieval Life in the Eden Valley

Saturday 3rd October

The Picts

Tuesday 10th November

Sheena Gemmel

Lancaster's Delftware Industry

Tuesday 8th December

Matthew Town North Pennines Archaeology

Recent excavations of an important post-medieval delftware pottery in Lancaster City.



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